

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 026210

R 071919Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8204

INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 08641

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: CHENG HENG'S VIEWS ON CAMBODIAN SOLUTION

REF: (A) PHNOM PENH 5540 (B) PARIS 20421 (1973)

SUMMARY: AT HIS REQUEST, CHENG HENG, FORMER GKR CHIEF OF STATE, CAME TO EMBASSY APRIL 7 TO DISCUSS HIS VIEWS ON THE CURRENT CAMBODIAN SITUATION. CHENG HENG SAID THAT SINCE HIS ARRIVAL IN PARIS, HE HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH MANY OLD FRIENDS SUCH AS TEP PROM, SOK CHHONG, THIOUNN AN, SIM VAR, AND BY TELEPHONE WITH SON SANN. THESE "ELDER STATESMEN" AGREED ON SEVERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A SOLUTION IN CAMBODIA MORE FAVORABLE TO THE NONCOMMUNISTS
END SUMMARY

1. END OF LON NOL'S PRESIDENTIAL ROLE. CHENG HENG THOUGHT THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO INDICATE CLEARLY THAT LON NOL'S "POLITICAL DEPARTURE" WAS DEFINITE, EVEN THOUGH THERE MIGHT BE NO SPECIFIC MOVE TO REPLACE HIM AS GKR PRESIDENT. IT WAS NECESSARY TO PREVENT LON NOL FROM ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE THE GKR FROM A DISTANCE, AS HE HAD DONE PREVIOUSLY WHEN HE WAS IN THE HOSPITAL IN HAWAII.

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2. DEPARTURE OF THOSE INVOLVED IN MARCH 18, 1970 "COUP". CHENG HENG SAID THAT HE HAD LEFT CAMBODIA IN ATTEMPT TO INDICATE CLEARLY TO OTHERS INVOLVED IN THE "CONSTITUTIONALLY-CORRECT" DEPOSITION OF SIHANOUK TO LEAVE THE POLITICAL SCENE. HE HAD NO WORD ON THE INTENTIONS OF SIRIK MATAK, THE PRINCIPAL FIGURE NOW STILL IN PHNOM PENH. CHENG HENG THOUGHT IT ESSENTIAL THAT ANY NEW GROUPING EXCLUDE THE FAMILIAR LEADERS (EVEN THOSE NOT ON THE CURRENT "LIST OF TRAITORS"), IN ORDER TO BRING IN NEWER FIGURES WHO MIGHT BE MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE OTHER SIDE. HE DID NOT THINK THAT SIHANOUK WAS PARTICULARLY OPPOSED TO HIMSELF AND ALSO HE THOUGHT MANY CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS DID NOT CONSIDER THE 1970 ACTIONS AGAINST SIHANOUK AS PARTICULARLY REPREHENSIBLE. HOWEVER, HE THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT TO INDICATE AS FRESH AN APPROACH AS POSSIBLE. CHENG HENG NOTED THAT SON SANN, ALTHOUGH AN ELDER STATESMAN, HAD NOT PLAYED A ROLE IN 1970 AND MIGHT THEREFORE BE ONE OF THE FEW TRADITIONAL LEADERS WHO COULD NOW MAKE A CONTRIBUTION.

3. POLITICAL PROGRAM BASED ON THE PEOPLE. PICKING UP SON SANN'S CONCEPT OF "POPULAR FORCES" AS THE BASIS OF THE NON-COMMUNIST REPRESENTATION (REF B), CHENG HENG THOUGHT THE NEW APPROACH SHOULD BE BASED "ON THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE" RATHER THAN ON ANY RPT ANY GROUP OF LEADERS IN PHNOM PENH. HENCE HE THOUGHT THAT REGARDLESS OF WHO MIGHT CONSTITUTE A GOVERNMENT, THE NEGOTIATORS WOULD BE BASED ON ORGANIZATIONS OF STUDENTS, BONZES, CIVIL SERVANTS, ETC. THE DIRECTOR OF THE NEGOTIATING TEAM MIGHT AGAIN BE SON SANN.

4. IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY SITUATION. CHENG HENG SAID THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR SOME EFFECTIVE RESISTANCE TO CONTINUE IN PHNOM PENH TO PROVIDE TIME TO WORK OUT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. WITHOUT CONTINUING U.S. MILITARY AND CIVILIAN AID, MORALE WOULD DROP AND EVEN A MORE POPULAR AND LESS CORRUPT GOVERNMENT WOULD COLLAPSE.

5. COMMUNIST REACTION. CHENG HENG HAD GATHERED FROM CONTACTS IN CAMBODIA (WHOM HE DID NOT SPECIFY, BUT SAID CONFIDENTIAL

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WERE RELIABLE) THAT THERE ARE IMPORTANT DIVERGENCIES WITHIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY. THE EXTREMISTS WISH TO TAKE PHNOM PENH MILITARILY DESPITE, IF NOT BECAUSE OF, THE LARGE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES WHICH MIGHT OCCUR. MODERATES, OF WHOM HE CLAIMED KHIEU SAMPHAN WAS ONE, WISHED MERELY A SUFFICIENTLY PROPONDERANT MILITARY POSITION TO INSURE COMMUNIST POWER, BUT HOPED TO AVOID A BLOODY SEIZURE OF PHNOM PENH BECAUSE OF THE UNFAVORABLE

IMPACT ON WORLD OPINION AND JEOPARDIZING THE POSSIBILITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 08641

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OF AID FROM THE WESTERN WORLD. HE ADMITTED THAT THERE WAS AS YET NO FIRM INDICATION THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD RESPOND, BUT HOPED TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION HERE IN PARIS IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

6. U.S. ACTION. CHENG HENG SAID THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR THE U.S. TO PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL BACKING, AS WELL AS SUPPORT WITHIN CAMBODIA FOR SUCH A SOLUTION.

7. EMBOFF, RELYING ON PRESS REPORTS, NOTED THAT U.S. WAS ENGAGED IN INTENSIVE RESTUDY OF THE INDOCHINA QUESTION, IN PARTICULAR THE VERY CRUCIAL SITUATION IN VIETNAM. WHEN U.S. POLICY DECISIONS WERE MADE, THERE WOULD NO DOUBT BE AN OFFICIAL USG STATEMENT. PLEASE INFORM IF THERE IS ANY OTHER COMMENTS WE SHOULD PASS TO CHENG HENG.

8. EMBASSY PHNOM PENH IS PROBABLY FULLY AWARE OF THE VIEWS OF CHENG HENG AND HIS CLUB OF "ELDER STATES-MEN" (INCLUDING SON SANN).

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